Recognition and Recovery of the Mind in Wordsworth's *The Prelude*: A Growth Narrative in Nature and History

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As the subtitle suggests, William Wordsworth's *The Prelude* traces the growth of the poet's mind as he develops from an "infant babe" (II.237) to a youth in nature to a man among his fellow men in society, following the course of his own life in the form of an autobiographical writing. This self-writing, however, does not portray a steady, linear growth from infancy to manhood, but rather repeats a similar pattern of frustration and recovery in both nature and society; the poet experiences failures in the face of the sublime and an abrupt stagnation in the growth of the self, followed by a narrative of resolution that reestablishes his belief in the mind and the self. In the moments of failure, being confronted with the alien external that cannot be reconciled with the self, the poet suffers a shock that hinders his perception of the underlying force and the imaginative capacity of his own mind.

In both settings, this loss of direction is reflected in the style of his writing as his poetry meanders without proceeding in a certain direction. In Book I, there is a recurring pattern in the childhood episodes where the poet, at first immersed in nature and communicating with it freely, suddenly experiences a moment of alienation and is chastised in its presence. Critics such as Geoffrey Hartman and Richard Stang agree

that although Wordsworth sets out with confidence, having returned to the natural scenery and being inspired by the "blessing in this gentle breeze" (I.1), his attempts to write are continuously frustrated. This is detected in the repetition of the above pattern throughout the episodes, and it is actually through these failed, circling attempts that the poem paradoxically starts its utterance. Similarly, in Book IX, while the poet is eager to believe and participate in the triumph of human nature that is to be proven by the success of the French Revolution, he is continuously disillusioned and shocked into humility by the unforeseen and uncontainable effects of the revolution. Richard Stang argues that the image of the tempest that "vex[es] its own creation" (I.47) in Book I—a symbol of the paralysis in the act of creation—"foreshadow[s] a later storm, the French Revolution, which also unlooses a redundant energy vexing its own creation," and that both frustrations originate from situations that seem to "bring 'vernal promises' only to be mocked by actuality" (55). After these twofold narratives in nature and in society, the poet ultimately achieves resolution to his mental struggles, as Hartman explains, when he finally recognizes and reclaims the powers of his own poetic imagination in Snowdon. The poet reaches a rediscovery of not only the external environments that inspire and elevate him, but also the workings of the human mind that enable such an interaction in the first place.

This essay aims to argue that the alienations of the self from the external world underlie the parallels in nature and history, and Wordsworth resolves these breaks by channeling his disillusionment into poetic form. First, I will start with identifying the patterns of alienation and recovery in nature and in history, following Geoffrey H. Hartman's reading that finds the cause of the alienation in the implicit presence of the mind's powers in the external world. The speaker eventually reaches the resolution to his growth narrative by acknowledging the imaginative

powers of the mind. The first section raises the question of what about this essential spirit unsettles the speaker so. The second section will examine the loss of the coexistence of "form" and "content" as the speaker outgrows the prelinguistic stage, and how the imagination plays a critical role in reconstructing this lost state in the poet's mind through the poetic device of "spots of time." The third section aims to shed light on the significance of Coleridge the listener as another important poetic form, especially how the speaker's call to Coleridge at various points in the poem works like a call to the particular self that the poem is trying to incorporate. Coleridge's continued presence in the nature and the revolution narratives stabilizes the process of self-writing and fills in the psychological gaps that emerge throughout the poem. Even as he seems to meander and falter as a result of his continued disenchantments, the recurring patterns of Wordsworth's psychological drama in fact come to form the poetic devices throughout *The Prelude*, his internal struggles sublimated into poetry.

I. Resolving the Self's Break from Nature and History—Through the Autonomy of The Mind

In Book I, the poet begins his speech with a note of resounding confidence. He follows the epic tradition of invoking a muse by calling on an animated natural force, the "gentle breeze" (I.1) that serves as a muse for him. Being reproduced as "a corresponding mild creative breeze" (I.42-43) within him, it inspires him to feel that he "cannot miss [his] way" (I.19) in writing the poem. But such an interaction between the nature and the poet's mind does not last; the Aeolian harp that symbolizes a poet's source of inspiration and passion is "soon defrauded, and the banded host / of harmony dispersed in straggling sounds, / and lastly utter silence" (I.105-107) prevails where he expected poetry to

come pouring forth. The medial caesura in the dash between "Eolian visitations" (I.104) and "but the harp" (I.104) marks the suddenness of his loss of confidence and creative energy, a jarring break between two states of mind. This abrupt transition from joy and confidence to a humbled silence forms the pattern for the childhood episodes mentioned in the introduction, "all beginning with a complete immersion in the natural, phenomenal world and moving towards… a separation from it" (Stang 59). For the rest of Book I, the speaker goes from a sense of joyful belonging as "a naked savage" (I.304) in nature to an abrupt realization that his presence there is like that of a "fell destroyer" (I.317), a "plunderer" (I.337), and a "stranger" (I.377). Even while the self actively communicates with the external, it is suddenly estranged from it.

Here, Geoffrey H. Hartman explains the reason behind such an estrangement—and how it fits in the overall growth narrative as the poetry nonetheless moves towards the poet's final vision on Mount Snowdon—by claiming that the imagination in *The Prelude* may be "*intrinsically* opposed to nature" (33). He brings attention to the poet's escapist tendency to retreat into nature when his poetic motivation is exhausted. As the poet recedes to the pastoral scenery asking himself "what need of many words?" (I.105), he momentarily forgets his tormenting desire to write and failed creative impulses (34-35). In the childhood episodes, his "paramount impulse" (I.244) for writing is translated into another desire, the urge to indulge himself in the "extrinsic passion" (I.572) of engaging with natural objects. But this pursuit is also a form of escape in that even in this state of happy diversion, he is suddenly reminded of nature as "not an 'object' but a presence and a power; a motion and a spirit; not something to be worshiped and consumed, but always a guide leading beyond itself" (Hartman 42). As the sublimity underlying the natural forces strikes him, he is inevitably alienated from the immediate natural surroundings that he was immersed in:

> The last autumnal crocus, 'twas my joy
> To wander half the night among the cliffs…
> In these night-wanderings, … a strong desire
> O'erpowered my better reason, and the bird
> Which was the captive of another's toils
> Became my prey: and when the deed was done
> I heard among the solitary hills
> Low breathings coming after me (I.312-30)

Such a pattern of alienation is often accompanied by the haunting impression of a "dim and undetermined sense / of unknown modes of being" (I.419-20): underneath the natural phenomena, the speaker detects the subtle presence of an elemental motive force that is not to be captured by the youthful consciousness. But it is apparent that he cannot approach the essential "modes of being" by following the impulse to chase birds, steal nests or boats. It is in line with the Wordsworthian pattern of interaction with nature that pervades his other works such as "Tintern Abbey": in his youth natural objects are the source of strong "passion" and "appetite" for him, but that state is only transitory as the poet instead comes to sense "a motion and a spirit, that impels / all thinking things, all objects of all thought, / and rolls through all things" (102-104). Here, likewise, the urge to be thus engrossed in and to take hold of the external forms of nature is a distraction from pursuing the more elevated framework of the "wisdom and spirit of the universe" (I.428).

This desire to satisfy the poet's "extrinsic passion" (I.572) becomes the source of a deep sense of guilt that underlies all the childhood episodes with the recurring stealing motif. There is a pattern of stealing followed by chastisement, as if punishing the speaker for desiring without patience the impossible task of accessing the inner order through the outward forms, the "everlasting motion" (I.431) through the "hourly objects" (I.422). The chastising hills ring with the "sounds / of undistinguishable

motion" (I.330-31) that remind the speaker of the awful movements of the "unknown modes of being" in nature, which is in turn recapitulated in the following description of a similar recalcitrant principle in the human mind:[1)]

> The mind of man is framed even like the breath
> And harmony of music. There is a dark
> Invisible workmanship that reconciles
> Discordant elements, and makes them move
> In one society. (I.351-55)

The evasive forces behind nature also seem to underlie human cognitive powers and especially the imaginative faculty, a creative force that reshapes the sensory experience by "reconcil[ing] / discordant elements, and mak[ing] them move / in one society." It is worth noting that the chastisement is not done by mere objects but instead by the ones that seem to be imbued with the powers of the inner order, the animated beings that seem to have powers of their own. The chastising natural forces in the episodes are personified as being conscious of their own movements and actions—"low breathings coming after" the speaker, the huge cliff rising up between the speaker and the stars "as if with voluntary power instinct" (I.406). In other words, the childhood episodes are already manifestations of the poet's psychological drama, supporting Hartman's interpretation that there is an "'underground' form of imagination…foreshadowed by nature since his earliest childhood" (43). The reason for his traumatic breaks lies in the half-conscious projection of his own mind's "dark / invisible workmanship" unto the external—hence

1) This moment is captured after a passage of time by the mature poet, the one speaking from the present perspective out of the "two consciousnesses" (II.32)—the past self and the "other being" (II.33) who has gone through the process of recollection and contemplation over the years.

the nature that is endowed with a sublime kind of conscious agency—a power that unsettles and escapes him, from time to time glimpsed at in obscurity.

What the poet here fails to confront and to fully perceive identifies with the creative power of the imagination, which ties back to the initial argument that there is a clear tension between the imagination and the nature in *The Prelude*. Then how does the resolution to this mental paralysis come about in the latter sections of the poem? Hartman argues that Wordsworth finally faces the power of his own mind in the crossing of the Alps in Book VI and in the ascent of Snowdon in Book XIII. The memory of the Alps is the partial resolution that takes place before the poem shifts its focus to the society of man. I agree with Hartman that in this section, unlike the hasty desire to grasp the tangible forms of nature in Book I, there is an "extinction of the immediate external motive (his desire to cross the Alps)" (40). It is through this cancellation of the immediate sensory receptions that he comes to feel the presence of what he later (after a passage of fourteen years) comes to recognize as "the explicit name Imagination" (40):

> Imagination—here the Power so called
> Through sad incompetence of human speech,
> That awful Power rose from the mind's abyss… (VI.592-94)

This image of the imaginative power "[rising] from the mind's abyss" is a revision and a transformation of the image of the huge cliff in Book I "uprear[ing] its head" (I.407); the sublime force that paralyzed the speaker in Book I is now to a certain extent clarified as the elevating power in his own mind. He addresses his conscious soul, exclaiming that "'I now recognize thy glory'" (VI.599).[2)]

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2) Hartman points out that there still remains an explicit gap between the past

In the latter half of the poem, the growth narrative is reiterated and expanded as the journey towards finding the autonomous virtue of Man within the framework of Wordsworth's contemporary social context. If, in nature, the sublime order is not immediately to be attained in the outward forms of nature, the poet experiences a similar detour in the course of the tempestuous events of the French Revolution. Stang notes that although the poem "begin[s] with a … personal problem, inability to carry out a great and apparently destined task…is also the problem of his generation, a generation composed of false stewards" (63), referring to the failed revolutionaries. More specifically, Books IX and X replay the pattern of psychological immersion and alienation within a social narrative by discussing his severe disillusionment from the belief in the revolution. The revolutionary power is also naturalized into sublime images such as "toss[ing] like a ship at anchor, rocked by storms" (IX.49) and "earthquakes, shocks repeated day by day" (IX.182)—a grand, pervasive, and unexplainable energy, much like that sensed in nature in Book I. Here also, the speaker's desire to seize what can be sensually perceived again precedes his understanding of those powers. When he visits the "dust of the Bastile" (IX.64), the ruins left behind after the first revolution, he sits down by the site

> And from the rubbish gathered up a stone,
> And pocketed the relick in the guise
> Of an enthusiast; yet, in honest truth,
> Though not without some strong incumbencies,
> And glad—could living man be otherwise?—
> I looked for something which I could not find,
> Affecting more emotion than I felt. (IX.65-71)

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and the present consciousness in this recollection of crossing the Alps, the insight dramatized as a belated understanding.

The act of "pocket[ing]" takes place before the realization that he searches for "something which [he] could not find" despite his sense of mission and excitement in the course of the revolution. The speaker grasps for an accessible, partial form of the sublime, earthquake-like powers, echoing the stealing episodes in Book I.

A similar pattern of disillusionment runs through both the childhood episodes and the revolution narrative, and the historical background plays a critical role in shaping and directing it. For instance, his observations of the political turmoil entail a deep-seated concern for the nature of man and the potential effects of exercising man's reason that often throw him into shock. The poet's knowledge of the violent aftermaths of the revolution—one tyranny being replaced by another, Robespierre's Reign of Terror, and Thermidorian Reaction—colors the memory of his stay in Paris. In light of these events, Wordsworth is unable to either sustain or reject his belief in the Godwinian ideal of man that asserts the improvement of the society as a whole based on the inherent capability of perfection in each individual. From praising the "faculties of man" (IX.246) and the possibility of the "government of equal rights / and individual worth" (IX.249-50), he switches abruptly to lamenting the rashness of the "advocates" (IX.255); "every word / they [utter] [is] like a dart by counter-winds / blown back upon themselves" (IX.261-63) and "their reason seem[s] / confusion-stricken by a higher power / than human understanding, their discourse / maimed, spiritless" (IX.263-66). The pattern of joyful anticipation followed by disillusionment and the intervention of the sublime ("a higher power than human understanding") draws a parallel with the Book I episodes.

The resolution to this inner trial in the revolution narrative occurs as the poet, although now averse to the specific figures who carry out the acts, turns to "a certain ideal of Man rather than man as…conditioned by environment and institutions" (Hartman 245). Just as he seeks be-

yond the tangible forms in nature, he "pursue[s] / a higher nature—wish[es] that man should start / out of the worm-like state in which he is, / and spread abroad the wings of Liberty, / lord of himself, in undisturbed delight" (X.839-43) even when he is most disillusioned with the course of the revolution. The 1850 text capitalizes the word and highlights the poet's belief in the concept of "Man": the idealized, autonomous presence of human nature as the *via negativa* (the negative way) to escape from the specific, outwardly manifested failures that traumatize him and thereby to attain "Liberty." Such a longing to find an "independent intellect" (X.834) resonates with the vision of the mind on Mount Snowdon. Due to the "vapours" (XIII.47) that "[usurp] upon as far as sight could reach" (XIII.51), there is a similar failure of the sensory vision as in the Alps (Hartman 246) which leads to an inward contact with "the perfect image of a mighty mind, / of one that feeds upon infinity, / that is exalted by an under-presence" (XIII.69-71). The poet embraces and celebrates the mind's imaginative capacity to "mold[], endue[], abstract[]" and "combine[]" (XIII.78) the external surroundings and to "make one object so impress itself / upon all others, and pervade[] them so" (XIII.81-82), thereby completing the narrative of self-growth.[3)]

Another point where the revolution narrative overlaps with and intensifies the nature narrative is when the poet's imaginative power, instead of coming in as an abstract solution at the end of each narrative, is practiced in both Book I and IX. The concept of the imagination as a kind of second creation by the mind is a crucial theme in these books because imagination is not only hinted at but exercised. Even if not noted directly throughout his traumatic breaks, it is carried out unknowingly or explained through the perspective of the mature poet. In his childhood, he

3) The constant gap between the mature consciousness of the poet and the youthful self dissipates as the two consciousnesses come together in the moments of the self-conscious performance of the creative ability.

perceives the things in nature that he originally sees through the "bodily eyes" (II.373) as "a prospect in [his] mind" (II.375). This inner sight allows him to modify and recreate the images, adding "an auxiliar light / [that] came from [his] mind, which on the setting sun / bestow[s] new splendor" (II.387-9)—a process towards fully acknowledging the force of his mental images. The imagination actually at work is as crucial a moment as the imagination found implicit within the sublimity of nature.

Similarly, in Book IX, Wordsworth continues to turn to romances, tales of lovers and knights, "slip[ing] in thought" (IX.449) from political discourse even while he is engaged in earnest dialogues with Beaupuis regarding "civil slaughter" (IX.443). This manifests itself like a division in the speaker's psyche, an uncontrolled attempt to contain the unsettling outer phenomena within the sphere of his imagination. If unable at this stage to acknowledge fully the mind's powers, his imagination emerges in unexpected ways by substituting fantasy for reality, thus creating surreal moments in the poem: "Sometimes I saw methought a pair of knights / joust underneath the trees…" (IX.460-61). The final tale of Julia and Vaudracour, lovers hindered by the oppressive pre-revolution society, portrays the social atmosphere from a recent period in French history. But at the same time, it is another reaction against "public acts, / and public persons" (XI.550-51) as the speaker turns to "instead / draw from obscurity a tragic tale" (XI.554-55). While these compulsive flights of fancy are not the exact same kind of imagination as that displayed in Snowdon, they serve as an effective device to show that whereas at the beginning he ran from imagination into nature, the order is now reversed in these moments. His imagination is already at work, growing both from and in spite of his disillusioned and divided mentality.

II. Coping with the Loss of the Prelinguistic State— "Spots of Time" as a Cohesive Structure

Discussing the process of alienation and resolution in nature and history raises the question of why the imagination is a perplexing and elusive force for the speaker. Why is its presence implied in a shadowy "underground form," and why does the speaker have the burden of recovering it? It is notable that Wordsworth's poetry of alienation foreshadows Lacan's psychoanalytic theory. According to Jacques Marie Emile Lacan,[4] forming a relationship between the Imaginary (the realm of "consciousness," "self-awareness," and "non-psychoanalytic quotidian reality") and the Symbolic (the sphere of the language system that consists society's norms, rules, tradition, institutions, etc.) is the way that people, as speaking subjects, consciously employ language and speech as the medium to express their thoughts and perceptions. The third register, the Real, is an extremely elusive concept that refers to "whatever is beyond, behind, or beneath phenomenal appearances accessible to the direct experiences of first-person awareness." Lacan posits the figure of the mother "as the key analytic referent justifying this rendition of the Real," and during the pre-oedipal stage, the child starts forming its own selfhood through its interaction with the mother. Before the intervention of the Symbolic such as the law or language, the child's mind engages in an all-encompassing exchange with the maternal figure ("the Real Other") who represents "an obscure omnipotent presence who is the source of all-important love." However, along with the passage of time that brings about a separation from the mother, the child suffers a loss where "the Symbolic dimensions [are] made to orbit around black

4) Johnston, Adrian, "Jacques Lacan", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2018 Edition).

holes of unsymbolizability" that is now "impossible to represent." In other words, whereas the forms such as the mother's voice and gestures used to come to the child as "a rendition of the Real," the intervention of the symbolic order separates the form (language) from the essence (its "unsymbolizable" referent). The loss of the Real Other also becomes a source of a deep anxiety that results from the attempt to "[control] the ultimately uncontrollable presence."

In Wordsworth's poem, this theory aligns with the speaker's alienation from the abstract, fundamental order residing in nature and the great sense of guilt and unease in the nature episodes. If they are indeed to be interpreted in terms of losing the presence of the Real in the prelinguistic phase, the speaker's growth narrative can be traced back to his infancy:[5)]

> Upon his mother's breast, who, when his soul
> Claims manifest kindred with an earthly soul,
> Doth gather passion from his mother's eye.
> Such feelings pass into his torpid life
> Like an awakening breeze, …
> …his mind spreads,
> Tenacious of the forms which it receives
> In one beloved presence[.] (II.241-55)

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5) Among the psychoanalytic critics of *The Prelude*, Tim Milnes, in his guide to the poem, summarizes Margaret Homans's reading that explains the section on the mother's eye in terms of Lacanian psycholinguistic analogy. Homans writes that "the entry into the symbolic order" is one that breaks the son's "blissful, inarticulate union with his mother" and "equates the acquisition of representational language with a loss that feels like his mother's death" (90). It should be noted here that while relying on this perspective from the psychoanalytic branch of criticism, in this essay the Lacanian analogy does not in effect extend to the reading on the "spots of time" that concludes this section. (Continues in footnote #7)

He also gathers "a virtue which irradiates and exalts / all objects through all intercourse of sense" (II.259-60) from the mother's eye. In other words, his mind absorbs at the same time both the "forms" and the fundamental "virtue"—a dynamic force that is the intrinsic order in "all objects through all intercourse of sense"—one within the other because they are both communicated to him with ease from the connection to the mother. The babe's soul "claims manifest kindred with" the mother's and can exchange feelings through the eye without language. However, this initial connection cannot last all throughout his life as "the props of [his] affections [are] removed" (II.294) and nature and the company of other human beings gradually take her place. Frances Ferguson explains the "form" and "content" in this infant state by identifying the "continued existence of a central beloved figure" (132) as the content, and the figure of the mother and "Mother Nature" as the forms—but there is an inevitable relapse of the initial state after the mother's death because "the visible world…will never yield up the dead loved one" or "the former existence of the content" (132). Thus, the speaker's continued pursuit of the forms in nature constitutes "that very search in visible forms [which] remains the only means of legitimizing the memory of the 'content'" (133). The loss of the inherent capability of the mind to perceive both form and content in unison haunts the subsequent perception of the external world, at times manifesting itself as a faint impression.

Within these next stages in nature and in society, as illustrated in the first section of this essay, the essence and the form are no longer given to the speaker as one; the alienation takes place. In these stages, the fear of the loss (of the mother, of the union between the form and the essence) is bound to the notion of death, because "death destroys the security of the affections in the coincidence of 'form' and 'content,' the appearance and the spirit" (Ferguson 133). Both the narratives in nature and amid the revolution effectively portray these alienated latter

phases because the speaker's sudden isolation is often associated with an implicit fear of death. For instance, when he is skating on the lake as a child, he suddenly breaks away from the scene and stops short:

> … —yet still the solitary cliffs
> Wheeled by me, even as if the earth had rolled
> With visible motion her diurnal round.
> Behind me did they stretch in solemn train,
> Feebler and feebler, and I stood and watched
> Till all was tranquil as a dreamless sleep. (I.484-89)

The speaker experiences a premonition of the state of his own death as he repeatedly imagines himself in a sudden suspension, stripped of his agency and vitality, while the rest of the world continues to move about him in a "diurnal round." This image is reminiscent of the image of death in "A slumber did my spirit seal," as the speaker envisions the mechanical movement of Lucy's corpse as it "roll[s] round in earth's diurnal course / With rocks and stones and trees" (7-8).[6] In addition to this imagery, a certain elegiac note recurs at the end of each episode: the image of "silen[ce]" (I.332), "an alien sound / of melancholy" (I.470), "the orange sky of evening [dying] away" (I.473), and the state of "dreamless sleep" quoted above. This mourning image is also recapitulated in Book IX, as the speaker suddenly comes across a roofless pile that has been destroyed "not by reverential touch of time" (IX.474) but by "violence abrupt" (IX.475), and he says the matin-bell "grieve[s]" (481) for the "wrong so harsh" (479). The repeated connotation of death does not only concern the literal murders and victims of the atrocities but also expresses grief at the lost state where the presence of the sublime power

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6) Along with the construction of this essay's overall thesis, I especially owe this reading of Wordsworth's suspension in nature in relation to death to Professor Suh-Reen Han's 2019 fall seminar "19th-Century English Literature."

or the impetus shaping the external would have felt instinctive and natural instead of like a sudden, unsettling awareness.

The imagination comes into play again as the poet's mind fails to reconcile with the sublime reality of death, but this time the workings of the imagination take the poetic form of the "spots of time" (XI.258). I would like to argue that these spots of time work as a cohesive structure that once again brings together the form and essence that were separated over time, recovering the mind by the power of the imagination. The speaker introduces the concept as follows:

> There are in our existence spots of time,
> Which with distinct preeminence retain
> A renovating virtue, whence, …
> …our minds
> Are nourished and invisibly repaired—
> A virtue, by which pleasure is enhanced,
> That penetrates, enables us to mount
> When high, more high, and lifts us up when fallen.
> This efficacious spirit chiefly lurks
> Among those passages of life in which
> We have had deepest feeling that the mind
> Is lord and master, and that outward sense
> Is but the obedient servant of her will. (XI.258-73)

Such a healing presence of the spots of time retains within itself a "renovating virtue" which is "a virtue…that penetrates" and echoes the all-reaching and stimulating virtue that was passed on to the babe by the mother. The speaker presents two episodes of these spots of time: the time he mounted a gloomy hillside on a horse and saw a place where a murderer had been hung, and the time he attended his father's funeral. Both of these memories revolve around the attempt to capture intense,

inexplicable feelings that death rouses in him.[7] They are such sentiments that cannot be explained by language, and the speaker confesses he "should need / colours and words that are unknown to man / to paint the visionary dreariness" (XI.310-12). But instead of being suspended, the speaker attaches these sentiments to the very sensory objects that compose the scene. The forms of specific objects become very important in these recollections and are depicted in vivid detail as "the visionary dreariness" itself "invest[s] the naked pool, / the beacon on the lonely eminence" (XI.314-15), and the woman whose "garments [are] vexed and tossed / by the strong wind" (XI.316-17). The form and the content are consciously tied together so that when the poet beholds the scene again years later, he need only observe the "naked pool and dreary crags" (XI.322) for the imagination to work its cohesive force. The spatialization of the temporal imbues the forms with such feelings as "sorrow" (371), "chastisement" (372), and "deepest passion" (376), and thus the speaker "drink[s] / as at a fountain" (386-87) from these sights and sounds as a mentally constructed way of accessing the inexpressible through the tangible. The images come to serve as a kind of mental hook to retrieve the elusive essence by metonymic association. Such is the power of the spots, and it is Wordsworth's goal to turn his poetry itself into a kind of "spots of time" so that he can "enshrine the spirit of the past / for future restoration" (XI.343-44) "as far as words can give" (XI.341)—joining the

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7) Tim Milnes also introduces David Ellis's argument that this passage "should be read as the poet's coded meditation on his own mortality" (102). Yet while Ellis continues with a psychoanalytic reading of the "spots" based on Freud's notion that "a mode of thought which is associated with very young children and which allows them to believe themselves immortal, can coexist or alternate with later understandings" (Milnes 102-3), this essay's reading rather aligns more with Wordsworth's own statement in "The Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*" that "[his] habits of meditation have so formed [his] feelings, as that [his] descriptions of such objects as strongly excite those feelings" (295).

words with the spirit, the language and the referent, recovering what was lost since the death of the mother through the act of poetic creation.

III. Apostrophe to Coleridge—A Technique for Self-Affirmation

The process of resolution and reaffirmation of the speaker's traumatized and alienated self takes many forms in *The Prelude*, but none is as frequent and noticeable as his call to Coleridge. In fact, the apostrophe takes place not only in the personal and the social narratives of Book I and IX, but at the end of almost every book throughout the poem. Coleridge in *The Prelude* is more than a mere listener or a personal friend, and actually plays a critical role in Wordsworth's self-writing as an addressee to whom the poet reveals his most vulnerable self—anxious to justify his poetic attempts—and his most confident self—celebrating the prowess of his own mind. In the first section, I have mentioned Wordsworth's "two consciousnesses" and how they come together through the workings of his imagination. The consciousness of the mature poet who has returned to the natural scene requires the memory of the child who goes through the *via naturalier negativa* in order to trace the growth of his mind. Likewise, the development of the "spots of time" ultimately entails a rediscovery of the past self that had inevitably been lost through time. Coleridge's role in the poem ties these previous points together because by calling to his absent friend and bringing him into the sphere of his poetry, Wordsworth in a way addresses the absent self of the past. The very nature of an apostrophe—addressing an absent one *as though* he is present, and thereby invoking the presence—fills in the psychological gaps that recur in nature and in history.

In Section I, I have discussed the recreation of natural images in the poet's mind. It is interesting that Wordsworth empowers his addressee with this crucial imaginative power as well: although Coleridge was

raised in the city, Wordsworth believes that he too is able to "shut [his] eyes and by internal light / see trees, and meadows, and [his] native stream / far distant—" (VI.282-84). He relies on the knowledge that his friend also has "sought / the truth in solitude" (I.482-83), echoing the inward eye that is the "bliss of solitude" that recreates the image of the dancing daffodils. When he calls upon Coleridge, it is as if he rouses the concept of the inner sight and the creative mind that he on his own cannot yet reconcile with nature; when he recounts his trip to the river Emont with his sister Dorothy, he *plants* the presence of Coleridge in the scene:

> O friend, we had not seen thee at that time,
> And yet a power is on me and a strong
> Confusion, and I seem to plant thee there…
> But thou art with us, with us in the past,
> The present, with us in the times to come.
> There is no grief, no sorrow, no despair,
> No languor, no dejection, no dismay,
> No absence scarcely can there be, for those
> Who love as we do. (VI.246-56)

"A power is on" the poet who alters the details of the moment, thereby recreating the personal narrative as he does stones and sunlight. And "a strong confusion," a blurring of boundaries, arises as Coleridge is inserted to some degree as a marker of that power; the affinity between him and the speaker here is that they carry out the "love" of nature in the same way, a similar form of nature worship that is identified as seeing by "internal light" in the next verse paragraph. From the viewpoint of the past that is already aware of the future, the speaker seems to be fending off the grief to come by ascertaining the consistent presence of the imaginative power that will ultimately lead him to a resolution, a power that is always there "in the present,.. in the times to come," and

was "in the past" even when the speaker did not acknowledge it. More than being endowed with the creative imagination, the presence of the listening ear of his friend helps to direct and handle it in the process of writing in hindsight, and this in itself is another creative force that drives his poetry.

Out of this shared psyche comes an affinity strong enough at times for Wordsworth to put Coleridge in a position parallel to his other consciousness. He confesses to Coleridge that "so wide appears / the vacancy between [him] and those days, / which yet have such self-presence in [his] mind" that he seems "two consciousnesses, conscious of [himself] and some other Being" (II.28-33). When later in the same book he enunciates Coleridge's significance as the intended addressee of the poem, the phrasing strongly resembles the previous description of the two consciousnesses:

> I travell'd round our little Lake, five miles
> Of pleasant wandering, happy time! More dear
> For this, that one was by my side, a Friend
> Then passionately lov'd; with heart how full
> Will he peruse these lines, this page, perhaps
> A blank to other men! For many years
> Have since flow'd in between us; and our minds,
> Both silent to each other, at this time
> We live as if those hours had never been. (II.354-62)

Coleridge is very much a figure in the past, "many years / hav[ing] since flow'd in between" them and especially their "minds, / both silent to each other." There is a significant temporal distance between them, and Coleridge is assigned the position equivalent to the past self that resists being retrieved by the present consciousness. Yet when the speaker directs his poetic utterances towards him, bringing him into the realm of poetry, they "live as if those hours had never been." Considering that

The Prelude overall is an attempt to constantly revive and reshape the story of that "other Being" and eventually to merge it with the self, the presence of Coleridge serves as a poetic device towards this purpose.

In the revolution narrative, Wordsworth keeps returning to the issue of Coleridge's illness and paints a hopeful vision of renewed health and vitality. He implores to his friend as follows:

> And Nature shall before thee spread in store
> Imperishable thoughts, the place itself
> Be conscious of thy presence, and the dull
> Sirocco air of its degeneracy
> Turn as thou mov'st into a healthful breeze
> To cherish and invigorate thy frame. (X.979-84)

This wish resonates with the speaker's sore need to heal and reinvigorate himself because he too is "sick, wearied out with contrarieties" (X.905) after the disheartening experience of the revolution. He also wishes to "[revive] the feelings of [his] earlier life" (X.931) and begin his recovery through the "Nature's self, by human love / assisted" (X.929-30). His sympathy with his friend in part arises from the social context of "this heavy time of change for all mankind" (X.993) and in this ailing state, he laments that the memory of "the lordly Alps themselves" (X.998), the symbolic image of the dawning realization of his own imagination, is not what it used to be since Coleridge's departure (X.997-1001). By entreating his friend's recovery, he is again also attempting to regain the inspiration from the inner creative faculty in order to sustain his poetry.

As the unchanging witness to his journey of self-writing, Wordsworth addresses Coleridge again as he concludes *The Prelude*. In his closing remarks, the speaker finds comfort in their shared vocation (XIII.397-400): to Coleridge, "the work shall justify itself" (XIII.412) because he

too is a dedicated poet. As Coleridge consistently serves as a reminder of the poetic imagination for the speaker in the previous sections, here he ultimately comes in as a poet figure whom the speaker can relate to and in whose presence finds the reflection of his own ambition:

> Prophets of Nature, we to them will speak
> A lasting inspiration, sanctified
> By reason and by truth; what we have loved
> Others will love, and we may teach them how:
> Instruct them how the mind of man becomes
> A thousand times more beautiful than the earth (XIII.444-49)

Using the pronoun "we" in the final lines of the poem, the speaker identifies Coleridge as a subject of poetic utterance along with himself. Eugene L. Stelzig also points to the pronominal shift from "you" to "we" (24), stressing that the latter is "reinforced to signify a set of shared values and a commonality of purpose" (24). However, while Stelzig's main argument is that Coleridge is subsumed into Wordsworth's self (25), I would like to maintain the focus on Coleridge's role as a poetic device. Invoking Coleridge's presence helps the speaker to find and assert his own utterance as a poetic creation, just like the ones they shared with each other in their youth (XIII.397-400). This knowledge allows the speaker to better articulate his convictions about the role of poetry—exercising a lasting influence on future readers, ensuring that "what [they] have loved / others will love"—and confidently claim it as the function of his own. The speaker's identification with Coleridge the poet works as a device that reassures him of the poetic nature of his own efforts, and consequently contributes to his final metacommentary quoted above, aiding the process of ending the poem with poetry about poetry.

Thus, Wordsworth's resolution to his psychological drama does not in fact end at a psychological level. The speaker's intense disillusionment

in the narratives of alienation and the following recognition of the mind are embodied in poetic structures and devices such as the spots of time and the apostrophe to Coleridge. Seeking beyond a self-absorbed mental resolution, Wordsworth reaches a poetic resolution in which the psychological breaks between the self and the external world resolve themselves into poetic forms.

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ABSTRACT

Recognition and Recovery of the Mind in Wordsworth's *The Prelude*: A Growth Narrative in Nature and History

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As the subtitle suggests, William Wordsworth's *The Prelude* traces the growth of the poet's mind. This self-writing, however, does not portray a steady, linear growth from infancy to manhood, but rather repeats a similar pattern of frustration and recovery in both nature and society. This essay aims to argue that the alienations of the self from the external world underlie the parallels in nature and history, and Wordsworth resolves these breaks by channeling his disillusionment into poetic forms. First, I will start with identifying the patterns of alienation and recovery in nature and in history, following Geoffrey H. Hartman's reading that finds the cause of the alienation in the implicit presence of the mind's powers in the external world. The speaker eventually reaches the resolution to his growth narrative by acknowledging the imaginative powers of the mind. The first section raises the question of what about this essential spirit unsettles the speaker so. The second section will examine the loss of the coexistence of "form" and "content" as the speaker outgrows the prelinguistic stage, and how the imagination plays a critical role in reconstructing this lost state in the poet's mind through the poetic device of "spots of time." The third section aims to shed light on the significance of Coleridge the listener as another important poetic form, especially how the speaker's call to Coleridge at various points in

the poem works like a call to the particular self that the poem is trying to incorporate. Coleridge's continued presence in the nature and the revolution narratives stabilizes the process of self-writing and fills in the psychological gaps that emerge throughout the poem. Thus, Wordsworth's resolution to his psychological drama does not in fact end at a psychological level. Seeking beyond a self-absorbed mental resolution, Wordsworth reaches a poetic resolution in which the psychological breaks between the self and the external world resolve themselves into poetic forms.

Key Words William Wordsworth, *The Prelude,* Self-writing, Alienation, Imagination, Poetic Resolution